

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 14833

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT,IN, UK, BG, RH

SUBJ: FOOT DISCUSSES EMERGENCY, RHODESIA, BANGLADESH WITH PRIME
MINISTER

SUMMARY: BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY LEADER MICHAEL FOOT MET WITH
PRIME MINISTER GANDHI AND HER FAMILY AND CONFERRED WITH CABINET
MINISTERS, PROMINENT PERSONS, LABOR LEADERS, AND OPPOSITION
POLITICIANS DURING THE NEW DELHI PHASE OF HIS INDIA TRIP. FOOT
ALSO HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE, ADDRESSED A SESSION OF THE INDIAN
COUNCIL ON WORLD AFFAIRS, AND DELIVERED THE KRISHNA MEMON
MEMORIAL LECTURE. FOOT DEPARTED FOR A SWING OF PROVINCIAL
CITIES ON OCTOBER 7. HE DISCUSSED ASPECTS OF THE EMERGENCY,
THE SITUATION IN BANGLADESH, AND THE HOPES FOR A SETTLE-
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MENT IN RHODESIA WITH THE INDIAN LEADERS. IN HIS PUBLIC

REMARKS, FOOT STRESSED BRITAIN'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, THE RESILIENCY OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE AND THEIR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE WAS MORE CAUSTIC IN HIS FINAL APPEARANCE--THE MEMON LECTURE WHEN HE CRITICIZED THE BIG POWERS. THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION HERE REPORTS FOOT GAINED NO COMMITMENTS FROM THE INDIANS, BUT CONCLUDE HIS VISIT AS THE CAPSTONE TO A SERIES OF HIGH LEVEL BRITISH VISITS HAS DONE MUCH TO RESTORE INDO-BRITISH RELATIONS TO AN EVEN KEEL. END SUMMARY

1. IN THIS LUNCH WITH PRIME MINISTER GANDHI ON OCTOBER 2 AND HIS SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH HER ON THE 6TH, FOOT REVIEWED THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN GREAT BRITAIN AT LENGTH. MRS. GANDHI ON BOTH OCCASIONS EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR THE CONTINUING LEVEL OF BRITISH DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE TO INDIA. SHE SAID SHE REALIZED THE DIFFICULTIES IN MAINTAINING THIS LEVEL WHEN THE REST OF THE BRITISH BUDGET WAS BEING REDUCED. MRS. GANDHI DISCUSSED AND JUSTIFIED THE EMERGENCY. FOOT RESPONDED BY WELCOMING THE RESCINDING OF THE CONTROLS ON THE FOREIGN PRESS, AND SAID HE HOPED FOR AN EARLY RETURN OF THE BBC. MRS. GANDHI HEARD THE POINT, BUT MADE NO SPECIFIC RESPONSE, COMPLAINING INSTEAD ABOUT THE ABUSES BY THE FOREIGN PRESS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE EMERGENCY.

2. DURING THE OCTOBER 6 MEETING, FOOT ASKED FRANKLY IF THE TIME HAD NOT COME WHEN FURTHER RELAXATIONS IN THE EMERGENCY COULD BE MADE. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE EMERGENCY WAS BEING RELAXED, AND THAT SHE WAS URGING THE RELEASE OF DETAINEES. FOOT THEN ASKED ABOUT CONFINED INDIAN PMS AND SPECIFICALLY, LABOR LEADER GEORGE FERNANDE, POINTING OUT THAT IN BRITAIN THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY FOR AND INTEREST IN THESE SUBJECTS. MRS. GANDHI REPEATED THAT SHE FAVORED EARLY RELEASES, BUT THAT FERNANDES WOULD HAVE TO STAND TRIAL. DURING THE SAME SESSION MRS. GANDHI STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY PLANNING. SHE SAID SHE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE MAHARASHTRA STATE BILL WHICH WOULD MAKE STERILIZATION COMPULSORY, BUT AFTER A CAREFUL CHECK BY STATE LEADERS AT HER BEHEST, HAD CONCLUDED THAT POPULAR OPINION IN THE STATE SUPPORTED THE MEASURE. SHE ADDED, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, THAT THE MEASURE REMAINED UNDER CONSIDERATION AT THE CENTER.

3. ALLUDING TO THE SECRETARY'S INITIATIVE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, FOOT SAID HE HOPED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD LEND THAT EFFORT SUPPORT. MRS. GANDHI TOOK "UNDERSTANDING NOTE" OF THE POINT. (IN HIS OCTOBER 5 SPEECH TO THE INDIAN COUNCIL, FOOT SAID, "THE BREAKTHROUGH IN RHODESIA OCCURRED

BECAUSE OF THE INITIATIVE OF DR. KISSINGER, AND WE WELCOMED THAT." HE APPEALED FOR INDIAN SUPPORT FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WHICH COULD POINT THE WAY FOR A SOLUTION IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTINENT ALTOGETHER. HE MADE A SIMILAR APPEAL IN A WIDELY REPORTED PRESS CONFERENCE THE NEXT DAY. IN A SEPARATE MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER BANSAL LAL, FOOT DISCOVERED THE LATTER WAS UNAWARE OF AT LEAST UNFAMILIAR WITH THE EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA. (THE DEFENCE MINISTER WAS A MEMBER OF MRS. GANDHI'S ENTOURAGE WHICH DEPARTED FOR AFRICA ON THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 8.)

4. AT THE SAME MEETING ON THE 6TH, THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD FOOT SHE FOUND THE SITUATION IN BANGLADESH "UNSATISFACTORY." SHE COMPLAINED ABOUT BORDER TROUBLES, DISSIDENTS AND INCURSIONS. IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH THE DEFENCE MINISTER, BANSAL LAL TOLD FOOT THERE WERE NO REGULAR INDIAN FORCES ON THE BORDER, ONLY POLICE WHO HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT KIND OF THING. BANSAL LAL SAID THAT THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS EVIDENCE THAT "INDIA HAD NO EVIL DESIGNS AGAINST ANYONE."

5. FOOT'S PUBLIC PERFORMANCE ON THE 5TH WAS WITTY AND SPARKLING. HIS DEFENSE OF BRITAIN, HIS ADVOCACY OF DETENTE, AND HIS HANDLING OF INAPPROPRIATE OR INEPT QUESTIONS WAS POLISHED AND GRACEFUL. BY CONTRAST THOSE WHO HEARD HIS KRISHNA MEMON LECTURE ON THE FOLLOWING EVENING FOUND THE PERFORMANCE SHODDY, FOOT ILL-PREPARED, AND HIS REMARKS INTEMPERATE. HE ATTACHED BOTH SUPER-POWERS IN PASSING AND WENT OFF ON AN APPARENTLY IRRELEVANT BUT LENGTHY PEAN TO THE VIRTUES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE V.T. KRISHNA IYER, RESPONDING TO FOOT'S REMARKS, SAID THAT ENGLISH WAS ALSO THE LANGUAGE OF SUPPRESSION AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THEN PRESIDENT NIXON'S COMMANDS TO U.S. FORCES IN VIETNAM. THE BRITISH DEPUTY

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HIGH COMMISSIONER PHONED AN APOLOGY FOR FOOT AND IYER'S REMARKS TO ACTING DCM ON THE 7TH.

5. IN HIS SESSION WITH COMMERCE MINISTER D.P. CHATTO-PADHYAYA AND INDUSTRY MINISTER T.A. PAI ON THE 6TH, FOOT MADE A STRONG BID FOR ADDITIONAL INDIAN PURCHASES OF BRITISH GOODS. FOOT POINTED TO BRITISH AID AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR SUCH PURCHASES BY INDIA. THE TWO INDIAN MINISTERS WERE NOT PARTICULARLY RESPONSIVE, BUT CHATTOPADHYAYA EXPRESSED SOME INTEREST IN JOINT VENTURES.

7. IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW THE SAME DAY, FOOT SAID THE KASHMIR PROBLEM WHICH FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD APPEARED TO CAUSE DIVISIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND BRITAIN NOW "LOOKS SOLVED."

8. ON BALANCE, THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION BELIEVES FOOT'S VISIT WAS USEFUL. THE HIGH COMMISSION CONCLUDES THAT INDO-BRITISH RELATIONS HAVE BEEN RESTORED TO A RELATIVELY EVEN KEEL BY THE FOOT VISIT WHICH CAPS THE APPEARANCE OF SEVERAL LEADING BRITISH POLITICIANS IN INDIA.
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